

White Paper  
*Change and Challenge: Metanational Education*  
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## **THE CHALLENGE OF METANATIONAL EDUCATION** **by Florence McGinn**

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Education's imperatives for transformational change in a global world of connections are relentless. How education responds to the new, international nature of global learning is a critical issue, for the whole enterprise of being human pivots on its challenges and its dreams.

The educational landscape demands a fresh, explorative look, for it has changed, and a key imperative is the understanding of learning's globalization. Tom Friedman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist, writes in [The Lexus and the Olive Tree](#), that "the system of globalization has come upon us far faster than our ability to retrain ourselves to see and comprehend it" (15). And, within the evolution of that systemic change, lie both pitfall and advantage, both survival and extinction. Understanding education's changed environment is pivotal to crafting a process of success that permits education's innovators and policy makers, its learners and its institutions, not only to teach the world but also to learn from it.

*The Free OnLine Dictionary of Computing* defines *meta* as "A prefix meaning one level of description higher. If X is some concept then meta-X is data about, or processes operating on, X" (<http://foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc/index.html>). Combining the *meta* prefix with *nation* and *education* suggests a learning concept evolution of an international nature. While acknowledging the parameters and forces of the nation state, metanational education recognizes an additional, fresh level of 21<sup>st</sup> century interaction that reaches not just across borders but beyond nations.

Metanational education in the digital era is about issues of integration and mobilizing knowledge's relational opportunities, empowering individual learners, addressing customized, local needs, and enabling innovation's continued systemic

development. Modern metanational education drives toward strategies that are explicitly designed to respect the codification of nation states within the complex context of globally dispersed knowledge. Successful metanational education must create a harmonious balance for the needs of individualized and localized customization with the dynamic process of international, collaborative opportunities for innovation.

Metanational education recognizes the tremendous power of the web, for as Nicholas Negroponte has long stated, “The change from atoms to bits is irrevocable and unstoppable . . . It is about living” (*Being Digital*, 4-6). There is a new order. If it is to be a higher order, then education must understand the electronic and human network’s nature and harness its potential into an educational convergence that serves the positive goal of literacy as a force of change. Metanational education must be a living system built upon an alliance that reaches beyond traditional borders into an untapped, well-coordinated cooperation that leverages access, collaboration, and opportunity.

Education already faces difficult challenges. However, a response to the opportunities of metanational education is an integral piece of the puzzle for facing education’s most challenging issues. A digital divide exists within our wealthiest as well as our poorest nation states. Other, shared issues of global concern include the shortage of educators, the developing nature of distance learning, professional development for administrators and educators, and the maintenance of an essential, human face and value on educational technology’s rich potential.

Education has long expounded cross-disciplinary values. Let education act upon its talk. In exploring metanational learning, education can step beyond the isolation of its traditional discipline and examine the business community’s responses to globalization. In *Digital Capital*, Don Tapscott, David Ticoll, and Alex Lowy investigate the “business web . . . emerging heir to the industrial-age corporation . . . and defined the Distributive Network as a new element of the taxonomy . . . recognized as models for creating economic value” (xi-xii). 21<sup>st</sup> century learning must maintain its human focus while enabling a new way of learning, working, and living.

A cross-disciplinary fertilization of exploration suits the Information Age. Harvard Business School professor Rossabeth Moss Kanter indicates in *Evolve: Succeeding in the Digital Culture of Tomorrow* that “You don’t have to be in business to see the cultural changes wrought by the Internet, but business is a good starting point . . . successful pioneers such as eBay, Amazon.com, and Yahoo! have already transformed industry dynamics” (1-2). The fresh processes within the best practices of industry and world class companies that have succeeded in innovation can form points of reflection that can demystify penetrating a new system’s educational dynamic, the framing of fresh methodologies, and the empowerment of meaningful policies.

Business is forging its new models. James W. Borton, international journalist and author of *Venture Japan*, indicates, “In the 1990’s, Pacific Rim corporate universities have swelled from 400 to over 2,000” (April, 2002, discussion with author). E-learning and on-line learning opportunities have created a powerful, new industry made up of new

learning companies, corporate learning arms, and fresh, global outreach by established learning institutions.

The international nature of such growth is a key element of educational business development. And, China, again, is a major focus, as indicated by Fred Harburg, president of Motorola University when he states, “China is one of our most crucial markets” (*World Higher Education Reporter*). Hong Kong companies, American companies and universities, Australian ventures, British initiatives, and European enterprises are internationalizing in China and throughout the world.

As a further example, in China, a 2001 *Eduventure* report states, “Education is the import that China really wants; Chinese citizens embrace education as the key to a better life” (eduventures.com). Chinese families value education, and their government has ambitious goals. President Jiang has stated, “The development of universities is the indication of the strength of a country education and science and comprehensive national strength” (*Tsinghua News*, November 30, 2001).

Educational experts and other Chinese officials agree. Wei Yu, the Chinese vice minister of education, indicates that “China aims to have higher education available to 15 percent of people aged 18 to 24 by 2005” (*World Higher Education Reporter*). That 36% jump in student numbers occurs in a country where there are, at this time, not enough slots for learners in the nation’s K-12 or university system and where more than 20 million Chinese already are Internet users and where schools and educational parks are being built at an extraordinary pace. In China, educational spending will more than double by 2005 from 1999’s \$40 billion to \$90 billion (*Eduventures*). But, can China, alone, achieve world-class metanational education? By that concept’s very nature, it demands global, collaborative alliances.

In the metanational education marketplace, global connection makes sense, for the need is so powerful. For example, China with its 1.2 billion citizens, is a country

- a. with 800,000 K-12 schools and a need for further educational infrastructure
- b. focusing its present resources to establish universal education only through grade 9
- c. privatizing its secondary school system
- d. experiencing a lack of infrastructure that short circuits the opportunity of 90% of postsecondary school students
- e. facing the massive retirement of senior university faculty, for the majority of its higher education faculty is over 50
- f. valuing education so highly the Chinese are willing to commit a significant portion of a family’s income to educate its single child, many indicating the child’s education holds higher importance to the family than housing or parental career.

China, reflective of educational global need in an Information Age, acts with the recognition that education is critical to the success of an international economy that is increasingly interdependent upon the well-being of its global citizenship. China is

contributing its own resources and seeking a network of resources and alliances to enhance the knowledge base and capabilities of a strategic resource, its intellectual citizenry. Within the nation state model, building education's robust opportunities are critical to a national framework. Within the metanational education model, connecting and integrating global knowledge bases accelerates opportunities for growth, innovation, and evolution.

And, America holds a key leadership position in the development of metanational education. An American education is a valuable commodity, and American business opportunity has magnetic qualities. In a *McKinsey Quarterly Report*, McKinsey indicates "global talent drains into the United States" where "over 40 percent of the foreign-born adults in the United States have at least some college education, thereby making that country the epicenter of the global talent drain" (<http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com>).

The academic impact and the systemic reach of education lies, as always, in empowering learners. Metanational education's potential provides additional, extraordinary power and depth. Jacques Hallak, the Assistant Director-General for Education for UNESCO, states, "The changing nature of education is part of the process. Learning is moving beyond the schools and universities . . . Borders, of any kinds, are increasingly porous" ([http://www.ed.gov/Technology/jacques\\_hallak.html](http://www.ed.gov/Technology/jacques_hallak.html)). Within that change, the international power and structure of global, innovative educational alliances must work together to weave the tapestry of the emerging nature of metanational education.

The nation state model and the metanational model's interests are intertwined. Wherever evolution takes 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, balance within the nation state's model and the metanational model's shared as well as opposing interests will have a profound influence upon the integrity and depth of education.

Education has focused in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century upon the wiring, the professional development, the assessments, and the standards. As education continues to build in those areas, a complex metanational education process of pivotal importance emerges. Beyond technology's fundamental ability to connect, the metanational education process holds a tremendous potential to empower the complex nature of individual fulfillment, harmonious collaboration, and true metanational innovation.

As education explores beyond its traditional barrier of four walls, implementing metanational education's broadest advantages becomes pivotal. Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen, indicates "Around the world, there are currently 125 million children who have never, at any time, seen the inside of a classroom" (*New York Times*, May 27, 2002). Lack of opportunity in such large numbers has resounding and debilitating significance, for what learning gives to children, fresh in the world, marks them forever.

Can we educate our children to the essential experience of harmony, the fundamental skill of active participation in a global society? If so, that will be the legacy as well as the evolutionary foundation of metanational education. Every child, educated well with Information Age skills of success and an understanding of global interconnectivity, becomes an asset to our society.

*We leave marks of passing like great,  
flat flowers of rose mallow  
placed for others to follow . . .  
we move forward  
knowing the throbbing kinship  
of lightning and thunder, moon and earth,  
and rivers and oceans and blood.*

*from BLOOD TRAIL by Florence McGinn*

On the horizon of tomorrow's metanational education, the combined contributions of our children will shape the world and define what it means to be human in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Metanational education's challenge is to learn from the world, to answer its needs, to build global opportunities and collaboration, to customize locally and individually, and to support knowledge's new and powerful global nature. Such a challenge will fulfill the fundamental needs of access and mobilized data, and it will move beyond to the complex nature of metanational education's capacity to sustain meaningful individual fulfillment, to build an operative, relational system, and to continue the evolution of an international process of collaborative innovation and achievement.

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Florence McGinn, Senior Executive Vice President and Director of Research for GKE (Global Knowledge Exchange) and board member of the GKE Foundation and the Mediatech Foundation, is a former United States Commissioner on the Congressional Commission on Web-based Education. She was appointed to that 16 member national commission by US Secretary of Education Dick Riley. The Web-based Education Commission was charged by legislation to make policy recommendations to the President and Congress as well as provide a full research report that is now available on the US Department of Education's website as well as in pdf format at <http://www.webcommission.org> Florence McGinn served as the chairperson of the Commission's K-12 National Issues Group. She continues national advocacy on international learning issues and educational technology initiatives.

Florence McGinn is the recipient of the Microsoft-sponsored Technology and Learning United States National Teacher award, and she has been honored as Princeton University's Distinguished Secondary School Educator. She has received a New Jersey Teacher of the Year award and a United States Eastern Region Teacher of the Year award. She is the recipient of several New Jersey Best Practices Awards and a New Jersey Association of School Curriculum award.

Mrs. McGinn is presently appointed to advisory boards with Cisco Learning Institute, PBS OnLine, SchoolTone Alliance, and Technology and Learning magazine. Mrs. McGinn, as a former English teacher, developed pilot projects through support from AT&T, Johnson & Johnson, Liberty Science Center, Lucent Technology, Bose Corporation, ComWeb, Global Knowledge Exchange, and the Hunterdon Foundation. Electric Soup, a literary magazine concept for on-line learning that she developed, received a NJ Best Educational Practices award, a NJ Association of School Curriculum award, and was cited as one of NJ's best web sites by NJ Monthly magazine and as one of the Internet's ten best educational sites by LearninginMotion. Her electronic videoconferencing project, Wired Words, received a NJ Best Educational Practices award. Her classroom served as a projects site for Macromedia Corporation, AT&T, Tegrity Corporation, COMWEB Technology Group, and GKE.

Florence McGinn presents widely throughout the United States and internationally on technology-assisted learning policy, design, and methods. She has presented as keynote or spotlight speaker at events such as Conference 2000 at the invitation of Singapore's Ministry of Education, at Singapore's 2001 E-Learning Symposium at the invitation of Singapore's National Institute of Education, at NECC, TechSpo, at the international AMC Conference, for keynotes in Korea, Japan, Australia, and China, and at SchoolTech, and for the US Dept. of Education, for the NJ Dept. of Education, for the NJ State School Board, and for groups including AT&T, NJASA, PBS, National Teacher Training Institute, and IBM. She has taught courses on technology-assisted learning at The Academy and the ETTC as well as in a televised, ten part series produced by NJ Network and been on televised interviews on technology-assisted learning on Shanghai Distance Education Television and NJ Network.

Florence McGinn has published on technology-assisted learning policy and strategies in publications including Singapore's Association of School Curriculum Journal, Technology and Learning, Media and Methods and on-line for associations including AT&T, The Milken Foundation, the Asia Media Information and Communication Centre, PBS OnLine, SchoolCity.com, Amnesty International, and ClassroomConnect. She is the CEO of Insynthesis, an educational and writing consulting firm. She is on the Board of Trustees of the Mediatech Foundation and the GKE Foundation.

Mrs. McGinn is a published poet. Her full-length collection of poetry, BLOOD TRAIL, is available at bookstores and on-line. Its free verse carries cross cultural currents. Its haiku reflects a feminine sensuality influenced by Izumi Shikibu and Ono no Komachi. One reviewer indicated, "She paints with the ease of Chinese brush strokes to place the archetypes and lush metaphors of human existence in her reader's hearts." Florence McGinn has published poetry widely in journals that include Midwest Poetry Review, Modern Haiku, Voices International, Taproot, Without Halos, Writing for Our Lives, Frogpond, Eclectic Literary Forum, Riverrun, Piedmont Literary Review, Creative Woman, Footwork: Paterson Literary Review, and Parnassus. She has published children's poetry in Cricket and Clubhouse. One of her children's poems is utilized by McGraw-Hill in its standardized tests. Another poem won a Peet's Coffee Poetry Prize in California and was utilized for advertising.

Mrs. McGinn holds an appointment as Off-Campus Poetry Professor to Dianye School in Beijing, China. A CD-ROM on "Educational Digital Velocity" featuring Mrs. McGinn's poetry, educational methodologies, and support materials is published and distributed in China by Centrix Technology and GKE.